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Sent: Wednesday, June 08, 2011 10:41 PM
To: CRC@acton-ma.gov; csiska@verizon.net
Subject: Caoutte-Simeone Conservation Restriction Committee

I will be traveling the evening of the June 13 meeting, but having helped to establish the conservation of this farmland I wished to share my thoughts on some of the proposed conservation restrictions. At the recent Acton Farmer's Market in West Acton there was a group collecting signatures on a petition to require that the farmland be set aside as "organic". At the time it seemed like an innocent if ill informed activity. As I reflected on this effort I began to consider the burden that such a restriction would impose upon the community and future considerations for this land. The term "Organic" carries with it all sorts of emotionally appealing implications. However, much of the organic movement in my view is based upon what comes close to religious convictions, absent much scientific underpinning. If an individual holds views about the kind and quality of foods he or she wishes to consume, that is a personal choice and he or she may "vote with their feet". However, it would not be appropriate nor strategic for the town to endorse or support these views in a conservation restriction. Self appointed experts in the organic movement cannot themselves always agree upon what constitutes 'organic'. Although the USDA-FDA has standards as to what may be labeled "certified organic", it is a patchwork of political compromises and not a measurable parameter. As a result I must wonder who would be the final arbiters of what proposed activities regarding this land rise to the level of 'organic' or fail to meet this fluid standard. I have attended technical meetings where certain food additives have been debated as to whether they are organic and the often tortured logic that has been offered up is very revealing, once again bringing to mind quasi-religious rather than scientific debate. Furthermore, I would ask that you consider the changing nature of economic and public health circumstances such as what happens to be prominent in the news even as this is being written. It is very likely that the deadly E.Coli outbreak in Europe may be related to certain organic farming practices and at the same time how is the town to react to for example a novel mosquito borne illness that requires local suppression of a particular disease carrier. Do we spray all around the property and at what distance satisfies the organic requirements? Or are we to idly stand by while we create an organic safe haven for this particular pest? None of us knows what the future may offer, but it does not take much imagination to conjure a future where being tied to a conservation restriction of "organic" would certainly become unwieldy and may endanger the public health. By way of full disclosure I have worked in toxicology and public health in the chemical industry for 30 years.

Respectfully submitted

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